



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

July 21, 2015

To: Governor's Office, Tim Baker, State Capitol, Room 204, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, State Capitol, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office

Parks Division

Lands Section

FWP

Commissioners

Fisheries Division

Legal Unit

Wildlife Division

Design & Construction

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202

MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103

MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620

James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624

Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624

George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624

Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771

Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624

Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923

Jack Jones, 3014 Irene St., Butte, MT 59701

Jack Atcheson, 2309 Hancock Avenue, Butte MT 59701

U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 420 Barrett Street, Dillon, MT 59725

Big Hole Watershed Committee, P.O. Box 931, Butte, MT 59703

Montana Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 7186, Missoula, MT 59807

Dan Vermillion, FWP Commissioner, Livingston MT

Earnest and Colleen Bacon, 2215 Fishtrap Creek Road, Wisdom, MT 59761

Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, 730 N. Montana Street, Dillon, MT 59725-9424

George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 563, Butte, MT 59703

Skyline Sportsmen, P.O. Box 173, Butte, MT 59703

Anaconda Sportsmen, 2 Cherry, Anaconda, MT 59711

E.T. Bud Moran, Chairman CSKT, PO Box 278, Pablo, MT 59855

Al Lubeck, 2710 Amherst, Ave, Butte, MT 59701

Adam Rissien, ORV Coordinator, Wildands CPR, PO Box 7516, Missoula, MT 59807

Josiah Pinkham, Tribal Arch., Nez Perce Tribe, PO Box 365, Lapwai, ID 83540

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Decision Notice has been prepared to remove brook trout to benefit westslope cutthroat trout in Brays Canyon Creek, a tributary to Grasshopper Creek in southwest Montana. Non-native brook trout are present in Brays Canyon Creek along with genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout. FWP and partners have been unsuccessful in attempts to remove brook trout since 2009 with electrofishing methods. The proposed

action is to use rotenone to remove brook trout from a small section of stream (0.9 miles), and continue electrofishing removals of brook trout upstream from this location. One public comment was received during a 30-day comment period ending 15 July 2015.

Based on the Environmental Assessment and need to conserve westslope cutthroat trout, it is my decision to proceed with the Brays Canyon Creek westslope cutthroat trout conservation project.

I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Sincerely,



Sam B. Sheppard
Region Three Supervisor

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DECISION NOTICE

Conservation of Native Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Brays Canyon Creek by removal of Nonnative Brook Trout with Rotenone

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 3, Bozeman
July 21, 2015

Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has proposed this project to facilitate conservation of native westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) in Southwest Montana. Genetically “pure” WCT are estimated to only persist in 4% of their historic range in the upper Missouri River drainage, and most remaining populations are considered “*at-risk*.” The proposed project, located in Brays Canyon Creek (near Bannack), includes the use of a piscicide (rotenone) to remove non-native brook trout that threaten WCT. This project is designed to reduce threats to WCT populations considered *at-risk* and to conserve the genetic legacy of existing WCT populations.

Montana Environmental Policy Act

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared by FWP for the proposed project and released on June 16, 2015 for a 30-day public comment period. The draft EA was titled: Conservation of Native Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Brays Canyon Creek by removal of Nonnative Brook Trout with Rotenone. The draft EA was circulated to a standard FWP Region 3 contact list and was also posted and remains available for viewing on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicNotices>. Legal notice indicating release of the EA was sent to the *Dillon Tribune* and *Montana Standard*.

Summary of Public Comment and FWP response

One written public comment was received during the 30-day EA review period ending July 15, 2015. The comment was classified as supportive of the proposal.

Final Environmental Assessment for the EA titled: Conservation of Native Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Brays Canyon Creek by removal of Nonnative Brook Trout with Rotenone.

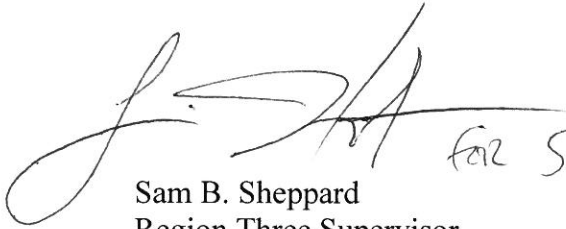
There are no modifications necessary to the Draft Environmental Assessments based on public comment. The Draft Environmental Assessment, together with this Decision Notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal.

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and the need to conserve WCT in the

Missouri River drainage of SW Montana, FWP's decision is to proceed with the proposed WCT conservation project in Brays Canyon Creek.

I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.



for Sam Sheppard.

Sam B. Sheppard
Region Three Supervisor